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TAGS: [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [MNUC](#) [KS](#) [KN](#)  
SUBJECT: SUBJECT: NORTH-SOUTH SUMMIT: HOW IT CAME ABOUT

Classified By: A/DCM Joseph Y. Yun. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

11. (C) Summary: According to a senior Blue House staffer, the Roh Administration had been pursuing a North-South summit for several years, but to no avail until two months ago. The negotiations were conducted by NIS (National Intelligence Service) and NSC staff. Cabinet members, including Foreign Minister Song, Unification Minister Lee and Defense Minister Kim, were kept in the dark until the early morning of the public announcement on August 8. For President Roh having a dialogue with Kim Jong-il was an important goal. Beyond that, Roh's expectations were limited to making progress on denuclearizing North Korea and perhaps some symbolic measures on military tension reduction. Economic and financial commitments would be very limited, as they required National Assembly consent, according to our Blue House contact. End Summary.

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Road to Summit  
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12. (C) During a September 4 dinner meeting with A/DCM, Park Sun-won, Secretary to the President for National Security Strategy, said that the Roh Administration had been pursuing a North-South summit for several years. A small "enabling" group was initially formed in the Blue House four years ago consisting of the then-National Security Advisor Lee Jong-seok, Park himself, and NIS staffer Suh Hoon. The first overture was made in 2005 when then-Unification Minister Chung Dong-young visited Pyongyang and met with Kim Jong-il (KJI). However KJI's response was lukewarm when Chung reminded him that during the 2000 summit he had promised a reciprocal visit to South Korea.

13. (C) When Song Min-soon became national security advisor in 2006, the summit initiative was put on the back burner. Song's position was that there had to be some progress in denuclearizing North Korea. Song was also quite adamant that a North-South summit had to be prepared in coordination with Washington, according to Park.

14. (C) In May this year, with Song no longer in the Blue House, National Security Advisor Baek Jong-chan came to the view that President Roh's time was running out. Baek, therefore, brought the secretive enabling group together -- Baek and Park from the NSC and NIS chief Kim Man-bok and Suh Hoon. The group sought guidance from President Roh, who responded that he would like to try again, but not before some progress in the Six Party Talks. Therefore, the group waited until the resolution of the Banco Delta Asia issue in July to approach the North Koreans.

15. (C) The formal approach was a letter from NIS Kim Man-bok to his counterpart in Pyongyang, Kim Yang-gun. Park said that nobody in his group expected a positive response, which was why Baek and he went to Afghanistan to negotiate the hostage release. The agreement on a date took some time to reach. Initially, the ROK side proposed the of July, but the North Koreans thought that was too early. On August 6 Pyongyang finally agreed to hold the summit at the end of that month. All senior ROKG officials were completely unaware that North and South had reached an agreement to meet until the announcement was made on August 8th. Park said that the Foreign Minister, Defense Minister and Unification Minister did not know about it in advance.

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Agenda For N-S Summit  
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16. (C) Asked about the agenda items for the summit, Park Sun-won provided the following insights:

-- Denuclearization. President Roh would definitely raise the denuclearization issue with Kim Jong-il. Roh was adamant that South Korea could not live under the threat of North Korean nuclear weapons.

-- NLL. Park said that it was unthinkable that Roh would agree to redraw the Northern Limit Line. The NLL was a territorial issue for the ROK which was bound by its constitution to maintain sovereign control. The most Roh could do would be to discuss issues such as joint use of the disputed fishing areas. Because the DPRK had so few fishing vessels, Park said such an agreement would result in de facto control of the area by the South, which would continue to patrol the area below the NLL as it does today.

-- CBMs. According to Park, the military confidence building measure Roh was most likely to pursue would be to call on the DPRK to dismantle or pull back some of its 140-plus guard posts (GPs) currently positioned within the DMZ. The ROK maintains approximately 60 such guard posts, he said.

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KJI Motives  
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17. (C) Emphasizing that he did not expect KJI to agree to a summit, Park speculated that KJI was exploring various options. North Koreans learned a lesson when their BDA accounts were frozen; they could not survive without at least minimally better relations with the United States. Moreover, Park speculated, KJI's health was not good. There were reports that he had a weak heart, like his father, and that he recently had an operation to insert a stent. Park offered that perhaps KJI had begun to think about a post-KJI North Korea.  
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